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ABSTRACT

Brief discussions are presented on the areas a cooperating teacher should concentrate on in the initial conference to determine the needs of a new student teacher. These areas include: (1) determining the student teacher's career aspirations; (2) identifying the academic training and preparation of the student teacher; (3) discovering the student teacher's overall objectives and educational philosophy; (4) examining the initially perceived competencies of the student teacher; (5) clarifying the student teacher's perceptions about the role of the cooperating teacher; (6) discovering factors affecting the student teacher's life outside of the classroom; (7) identifying the student teacher's strengths and weaknesses; (8) exploring the student teacher's understanding of learners' needs; and (9) determining the extent of the student teacher's knowledge of school district policies, curriculum, and school routine. (JD)

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES FOR SUPERVISING TEACHERS

USING THE INITIAL CONFERENCE AS A NEEDS ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

by

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Prepared under the sponsorship of the Academic Affairs Conference of Midwestern Universities and the Chicago Consortium of Colleges and Universities.

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Introduction

This self-instructional module contains an audio tape and some printed activities. It is designed to assist you, a classroom supervising teacher in the process of knowing your student teacher and planning the most helpful student teaching program possible. The recommended procedure is first to read the "Introduction" section of this booklet. Next, listen to the taped presentation, and then proceed with the activities.

RATIONALE

In Self Renewal, John Gardner suggests that the formalized educational program should allow for the development of skills, habits of mind, and the kinds of knowledge and understanding which will enable the learner to be involved in a continuous process of change and growth. Many educators today view the student as a vessel to be filled instead of a person in process who needs tools to facilitate that process. What is required is a program that will help individuals develop inner resources so they can attain an independence in learning and be able to cope with the unforeseen and unpredictable challenges of a constantly changing world.

If educators hope to develop and foster an educational program

leading to self renewal, it is imperative that future educators be given opportunities to develop their own inner resources during their educational experiences--especially during their student teaching experience. It therefore becomes essential that supervising teachers develop skills which will ensure that the student teacher is given every opportunity to develop independence. A supervising teacher needs to develop skills which will facilitate the student teacher's capability to develop a process by which he/she can modify his/her teaching to meet the challenges offered by our rapidly changing society.

Jersild, in In Search of Self, says that the purpose of a formalized educational program is to help the learner acquire realistic attitudes toward the actualization of human potential. Programs that will lead to meaningful results will support the individual's search for an understanding of his/her needs and wants, emotions, strengths and weaknesses, and behavior. Significant learning is self-initiated and pervasive, involving both the affective and cognitive aspects of the learner. It brings about a change in the behavior, attitudes, and personality of the individual. Programs should be organized and administered so that both the teacher and the learner are valued and that each can come to new awareness and experience growth. The development of the student teacher's self-awareness is particularly essential to a meaningful student teaching program.

The supervising teacher plays a critical role in the development of future teachers. If we are to successfully train teachers who will foster and develop self-awareness and be self-renewing, it is imperative

that the supervising teacher take the needs of the student teacher into consideration at the onset of the student teaching experience. The supervising teacher must possess a high level of skill to adequately assess a student teacher's needs. He/she must be able to identify needs and then plan accordingly. The supervising teacher must become adept at conferencing techniques as well as being a good listener, observer, and diagnostician. It is important that the supervising teacher identify where the student teacher is coming from.

The initial conference should be the beginning of a needs assessment that will continue throughout the experience. It should create the atmosphere that will allow the student teacher and the supervising teacher to constantly reassess what is happening.

PROCEDURE FOR ACTIVITIES

1. The audio cassette tape included in this module contains a simulated conference between a student teacher and her supervising teacher. This is their first meeting. The supervising teacher is attempting to conduct a conference that will provide him with the kind of information that will help in structuring the student teaching experience for the individual. For Activity I, as you listen to the tape, list the areas covered in the conference that you feel were vital to successfully meeting this objective. After you have listed the important points discussed in the conference, tell why you feel they were important to the initial conference. Remember, the supervising teacher is trying to assess the student teacher's needs

as perceived by the student teacher.

2. For Activity II, list those areas that were NOT covered in the discussion, but that you feel should be included in an initial conference between student teacher and supervising teacher. Again, tell why you would include the points you have listed.

3. After you have derived areas that you feel were covered and areas that should have been covered but were not, refer to the authors' activity sheets in the "Activities" section of this manual. Compare your insights with those of the authors. The areas listed are offered only as a means to stimulate additional reflection on needs analysis. The authors feel that if your list contains a majority of the areas listed on the authors' activity sheet, you are developing skills necessary for effective needs assessment of student teachers.

Activities

ACTIVITY SHEET I

1. Career Aspirations of the Student Teacher

It is impossible to structure a student teaching experience which will mirror the student teacher's plans for his/her career. Each classroom has unique characteristics and situations which must be dealt with individually. However, if the supervising teacher is aware of the student teacher's perceptions of future career plans, it may be possible for the supervising teacher to set up experiences outside the classroom which would facilitate the student teacher's ability to handle other types of situations. For example, the student teacher's assignment may be at the primary level, yet she hopes to gain employment at the intermediate level. The supervising teacher, having this knowledge, may be able to arrange for the student teacher to plan and carry out lessons in another classroom at the intermediate level.

2. Academic Training and Preparation of Student Teacher

The supervising teacher should identify the student teacher's background as far as professional preparation is concerned. Each student teacher will bring a unique set of experiences with him/her to the student teaching assignment. The institution, the course work, and the university personnel will differ. This information will enable the supervising teacher to better structure the experience from the beginning.

3. Student Teacher's Philosophy of Education

Hopefully, all teachers operate in a manner which is guided by some overall objectives. If the supervising teacher is to evaluate the student teacher's performance accurately, he/she must be aware of the rationale behind the student teacher's actions. The supervising teacher must be able to distinguish between the philosophy that guides his/her teaching and that of the student teacher. It is also important that the student teacher begin to understand and assess his/her own performance in terms of a basic philosophical foundation. By asking the student teacher to identify his/her philosophy, the supervising teacher can provide, from the beginning, an opportunity for self-evaluation and self-awareness on the part of the student teacher.

4. Initial "Perceived" Competencies of Student Teacher

The student teacher needs to experience success at the onset. He/she will probably have some areas with which he/she feels more competent to begin. The supervising teacher should help the student teacher identify tasks which he/she would be most comfortable performing. This information will help the supervising teacher in making both short-range and long-range plans. The supervising teacher can begin by picking up on strength areas and gradually working into problem areas.

5. Student Teacher's Perceptions About the Role of the Supervising Teacher

It is important to give the student teacher the opportunity to express what he/she expects of the supervising teacher. The experience should be a cooperative effort. Therefore, the student teacher's input on the role of the supervising teacher will help structure the relationship.

ACTIVITY SHEET 11

1. Factors Affecting Student Teacher's Life Outside the Classroom

It is important to identify any external factors which could potentially affect the student teacher's performance in the classroom. The supervising teacher needs to be aware of other forces working on the student teacher--is he/she working? taking classes? Other responsibilities that the student teacher has may influence his/her performance during the student teaching experience. It should be determined at the beginning whether the outside factors could be negative influences.

2. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Student Teacher

In the initial conference, it is helpful to have the student teacher identify his/her strengths and weaknesses as he/she perceives them. This will allow the supervising teacher to plan his/her role more effectively. Identifying potential trouble areas may eliminate some problems. A successful student teaching program will build upon strengths and improve upon weaknesses. For example, it might be very beneficial to allow the student teacher the opportunity to begin by planning and preparing in the subject area which he/she perceives as his/her strongest.

3. Student Teacher's Understanding of Learners' Needs

Just as it is important for the supervising teacher to know the student teacher, it is important that the student teacher gain insights into the school and the community. For example, effective classroom management can be facilitated by a thorough understanding of the learners' total environment.

4. Student Teacher's Knowledge of the District

The supervising teacher should try to determine what gaps exist concerning the student teacher's knowledge of district policies, curriculum, and school routine. For example, the student teacher should be made aware of emergency situation procedures. The supervising teacher should schedule interviews with other school personnel to enhance the student teacher's knowledge in this area.

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